



**University of
Zurich**^{UZH}

**Zurich Open Repository and
Archive**

University of Zurich
University Library
Strickhofstrasse 39
CH-8057 Zurich
www.zora.uzh.ch

Year: 2012

The Phonetics Lab and The Phonogram Archives at Zurich University, Switzerland

Dellwo, Volker ; Studer-Joho, Dieter

Posted at the Zurich Open Repository and Archive, University of Zurich
ZORA URL: <https://doi.org/10.5167/uzh-113612>
Journal Article

Originally published at:

Dellwo, Volker; Studer-Joho, Dieter (2012). The Phonetics Lab and The Phonogram Archives at Zurich University, Switzerland. *The Phonetician*, 101:91-95.

Location

The Norwegian University of Science and Technology < <http://www.ntnu.edu>> (NTNU) consists of two campuses <<http://www.ntnu.edu/about-ntnu/campuses>>. The Gløshaugen campus is home to the engineering sciences, while Dragvoll hosts the humanist and social sciences. Dragvoll is just outside Trondheim, and a bus ride into the city centre takes 15 minutes. Most of the buildings are connected by glass-roofed streets, with a bookshop, a café, small shops and a student cafeteria, in addition to the university library, lecture halls and offices.



Walking the indoor streets of Dragvoll or enjoying the sunny spell we call winter

What else?

Students can use the university's sports facilities, and there is ample opportunity for hiking in the beautiful surroundings of Trondheim, which is situated next to a fjord. During the long winters, you can go skiing in “lysløper” (lighted ski trails) in the Estenstadsmarka close to Dragvoll, or in the Bymarka. There are also ski jumps, as well as alpine slopes, in the vicinity of Trondheim. There are many lakes where you can go for a swim in summer or skate in winter. The city itself is the third-largest city in Norway – but it is still small. It has a cozy atmosphere with its wooden houses, and is at the same time alive with its large student population and rich cultural life.

Jacques Koreman
e-mail: jacques.koreman@ntnu.no

THE PHONETICS LAB AND THE PHONOGRAM ARCHIVES AT ZURICH UNIVERSITY, SWITZERLAND

The need for knowledge in phonetics as a language expert was probably one of the main motivations for the English philology professor Eugen Dieth to found the Phonetics Lab at the University of Zürich (UZH) in 1935 and to carry out phonetics research using early versions of palatography and sound kymography (Dieth, 1950). Apart from focusing on speech research activities, Dieth was also involved in descriptive work on dialectal variability. For this reason, he desired to

maintain the ‘Phonogram Archives’, which were co-founded in 1909 at UZH by Albert Bachmann and Louis Gauchat with the aim of collecting vernacular language recordings in the four Swiss national languages (German, French, Italian and Reto-Romance). At present, both the Phonetics Lab and the Phonogram Archives compose two inseparable institutions in the Faculty of Philosophy at UZH that have actively been involved in phonetics and dialectology research and teaching for the past decade.

UZH is the largest of the 10 Swiss universities in terms of number of students and staff members. A need for knowledge in phonetics and speech sciences in both research and education exists across a wide variety of disciplines such as the philologies (German, English and Romance languages), psychology, general linguistics and others. The Phonetics Lab/Phonogram Archives can be viewed as a hybrid institute which serves research needs in a variety of departments and offers students from a wide range of disciplines the facilities and expertise to carry out projects in phonetics and speech sciences at Graduate, Postgraduate and Doctoral level. We do not offer degree courses specifically in phonetics, but it is part of the required program for most philology students (English, German and Romance languages) for them to visit the phonetics lectures provided by the Phonetics Lab. Students with a deeper interest in the subject then take part in voluntary higher level phonetics courses and graduate in a related discipline (at any level) with a focus in a phonetic topic. Supervision and examination of such students is provided by staff-members of the Phonetics Lab.

Our lab consists of a sound-proof booth with a supervisory window that is well suited for high-quality speech recordings and speech perception experiments. The booth has high-end recording equipment permanently installed, and we carry out standard speech measurement and analysis techniques, like laryngography, palatography and phonatory aerodynamic analysis. We also own a large variety of portable recording devices and perceptual testing equipment for field work. In addition, we have our own research library with the main journals in the area of phonetics and speech sciences and a large number of monographs from all areas of spoken language, phonetics, linguistics, acoustics, and speech and hearing sciences. All of our facilities are easily accessible in the tower of the main UZH building right in the heart of Zurich.

At present our team is formed by the following researchers who are actively involved in teaching and/or research in phonetics and speech archiving (alphabetically by surname):

- Camilla Bernardasci (Student Research Assistant)
- Dario Brander (Post-graduate Research Assistant)
- Volker Dellwo (PhD, Assistant Professor of Phonetics/Phonology)
- Elvira Glaser (PhD, Professor of German Linguistics and member of permanent leading board)
- Lea Hagmann (Student Research Assistant)

- Ingrid Hove (PhD, part-time Lecturer)
- Marie-José Kolly (Research Assistant and PhD student)
- Adrian Leemann (PhD, Post-Doc in Phonetics/Speaker identification)
- Michele Loporcaro (PhD, Professor of Romance Linguistics and Head-of-Lab)
- Mathias Müller (Student Research Assistant)
- Stephan Schmid (PhD, PD, Senior Lecturer of Phonetics)
- Daniel Schreier (PhD, Professor of English Linguistics and member of permanent leading board)
- Michael Schwarzenbach (lic. phil, Research Assistant)
- Jürg Strässler (PhD, part-time Lecturer)
- Dieter Studer (lic. phil, Research Assistant)
- Sibylle Sutter (Post-graduate Research Assistant)

Our research interests range from historical sound development over synchronic dialectology to speech production, acoustics and perception, and we work on segmental, as well as suprasegmental/prosodic levels of analysis. Work is currently being carried out on the distribution of rhythmic patterns across Italian and Swiss German dialects (*Stephan Schmid*), and we are interested in which functions rhythmic and timing variability may have in human speech communication (*Volker Dellwo, Lea Hagmann, Mathias Müller*). In a number of pilot studies, we found that there is significant rhythmic variability between speakers. We are now interested in how this variability can be used in areas like speaker identification (*Volker Dellwo, Adrian Leeman, Marie-José Kolly, Stephan Schmid*). For this project we received major grant funding for three years by the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNF). We are also interested in how this variability may help listeners to segregate two speakers speaking simultaneously (*Volker Dellwo, Dario Brander, Sibylle Sutter*; see Cushing & Dellwo, 2010). For this project we received one year start-up funding by the University of Zurich Research Fund. Another significant expertise in the group is dialectal distribution of sound patterns and the diachronic phonological development in Italian dialects (*Michele Loporcaro & Stephan Schmid*) and Swiss German (*Elvira Glaser*), as well as socio-phonetic distribution of speech features across non-standard varieties of English (*Daniel Schreier*). On a yearly basis, the Romance language oriented members of the group organize fieldwork trips to various regions of the Italian speaking world to systematically record a wide variety of Italian accents and dialects. These recordings have led to research on the distribution and functions of phonemic vowel quantity across different accents of Italian and to arguments about the historical phonological development of Romance languages (Loporcaro, 2007). For research into the historical development and synchronic dialectal variability of Swiss German (Fleischer & Schmid, 2006, Christen, Glaser & Friedli, 2010), the Phonogram Archives offer an impressive collection of sound

carriers which have been collected and archived over the past 100 years. This material contains valuable specimens of language varieties that have since become extinct or near-extinct – such as the West Yiddish dialect spoken in Lengnau and Endingen (Aargau) or the franco-provençal “Patois” – formerly spoken all over the Western (now French-speaking) part of Switzerland. It also contains early recordings on wax disc (collaboratively recorded with the Phonogram Archives of Vienna between 1909 and 1923), which are now part of the UNESCO Memory of the World Programme (Fleischer & Gadmer, 2002). Major projects of the archives (*Dieter Studer, Michael Schwarzenbach, Lea Hagmann & Camilla Bernardasci*) are currently the compilation of an on-line catalogue, the production of a digital version of the entire historic archives holdings (in collaboration with the Swiss national Sound Archives in Lugano) and the presentation of a major exhibition on Swiss dialects together with the Swiss National Library in Bern in 2012.

In teaching, we offer a variety of lectures, seminars and practical lab sessions at an introductory and advanced level of phonetics. For students of philology, we have specifically designed courses in German, English and Romance phonetics. Additionally, we offer lab sessions in which higher level and postgraduate students learn experimental techniques in speech production, acoustic measurements and speech perception. In different lecture series, students are introduced to the main concepts, as well as specialist areas of phonetics (e.g. speaker idiosyncratic features or speech rhythmic variability). We have strong links to other departments like Experimental Audiology or Psychology with whom we provide collaborative PhD supervision. There are currently four PhD students in the lab, and the interest is growing.

At present, both the Phonetics Lab and the Phonogram Archives are in a highly dynamic situation of change. Both institutions are co-directed in different ways by a board of professors from the philologies, Michele Loporcaro (Romance Linguistics), Elvira Glaser (German Linguistics) and Daniel Schreier (English Linguistics). While both institutions were rather separate entities during the past decades, a proposal is currently being carried out to unite them in a single unit (on a practical level, this process is nearly completed). In addition, the university recently decided to invest into the area of spoken language sciences and established a new Assistant Professorship in Phonetics/Phonology for which Volker Dellwo (formerly University College London) was hired in August 2010. With the merger of the Phonetics Lab and the Phonogram Archives, we are expecting to strengthen phonetics and dialectology research and teaching at UZH in the future. The group managed to attract grant funding in the past and at present. More major and minor grant applications have been submitted over the past months. We thus hope to further enlarge our research team and be able to offer more funded PhD research in Phonetic Sciences at UZH in the near future. Should we manage to convince UZH to make further investments into our lab (for example a full-professorship in Phonetics); our aim would be to set up a degree course in phonetics at the postgraduate level.

Further information on the Phonetics Lab, the Phonogram Archives and our dynamic situation can be found at our (still separate) webpages www.pholab.uzh.ch and www.phonogrammarchiv.uzh.ch.

References

- Christen, H. , Glaser, E. and Friedli, M. (2010) *Kleiner Sprachatlas der deutschen Schweiz*. Huber: Frauenfeld.
- Cushing, I.R., and Dellwo, V. (2010) *The role of speech rhythm in attending to one of two simultaneous speakers*. In: *Electronic Proceedings of Speech Prosody, Chicago/USA* (<http://speechprosody2010.illinois.edu/papers/100039.pdf>)
- Dieth, E. (1950) *Vademekum der Phonetik*. Bern: Francke.
- Fleischer, J. and Gadmer, T. (2002) *Schweizer Aufnahmen–Enregistrements Suisses–Ricordi sonori Svizzeri–Registrazions Svizras. Sound Documents from the Phonogrammarchiv of the Austrian Academy of Science. The Complete Historical Collections 1899-1950, Series 6/1- 6/3*. Wien: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Zürich: Phonogrammarchiv der Universität Zürich.
- Fleischer, J. and Schmid, S. (2006) *Zurich German*. In: *Journal of the International Phonetic Association* 36.2: 243-253
- Loporcaro, M. (2007) *Facts, theory and dogmas in historical linguistics: vowel quantity from Latin to Romance*. In : Salmons J. C. and Dubenion-Smith S. (eds.), *Historical Linguistics 2005. Selected papers from the 17th International Conference on Historical Linguistics, Madison, Wisconsin, 31 July- 5 August 2005*. Amsterdam, Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 311-336.



Some staff members of the Phonetics Lab and the Phonogram Archives at Zurich University in front of our recording cabin/sound lab (from left to right: Volker Dellwo, Michael Schwarzenbach, Stephan Schmid, Ingrid Hove, Dieter Studer, Camilla Bernardasci).

Volker Dellwo & Dieter Studer
e-mail: volker.dellwo@uzh.ch